

NOTE FROM ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION: AS EXPECTED, REGULAR POWER WAS FULLY RESTORED AT VIENNA CC AT 2:50 P.M ON THE DAY OF THIS REPORT.



Vienna Correctional Center experiences power outages

Posted: Jan 08, 2014 3:30 PM CST

Power at the Vienna Correctional Center went out at 5:02 p.m. on Tuesday, January 7, according to the Illinois Department of Corrections.

At the time of the outage, they say the final shift of dinner was underway. It was not interrupted and breakfast on Wednesday was served in their cell.

According to the IDOC, no inmate behavior issues, health issues or other concerns resulted from this situation. A senior official at VCC described the behavior of some inmates making noise as, "like a college frat house when the lights go out." Officials say there were no concerns about any of that affecting fellow inmates or property during the power outage.

They say there was no staff health or other issues.

VCC went on immediate Level 1 lockdown, no inmate movement outside cells except for health reasons, at 5:03 p.m. They came off the Level 1 lockdown Wednesday morning and went to Level 4, lightest level of lockdown.

Due to severe weather, inmates have not had exercise yard for three days, but indoor exercise has returned to a normal schedule.

Officials say the backup generator system did not kick in due to equipment failure which was later fixed. Emergency lighting in various forms, including halogen lights on poles, was used until the backup generator provided power.

They say the backup generator began providing power at 1:10 a.m. on Wednesday with full power supplied by generator to the entire facility at 3:10 a.m.

As of 2 p.m. on Wednesday, the regular electric supply system was still down, but repairs were progressing well and the system was expected to be up and running Wednesday afternoon.

Equipment owned or operated by the power supplier Ameren was not involved in the breakdown, but Ameren did loan equipment to Vienna at no cost for the repairs. The interruption to power occurred in the VCC power system.

The IDOC said severe weather required additional electricity, which strained the VCC system. That strain led to the breakdown of a large conduit within the original, 48-year-old electrical loop running through VCC. That "break" tripped many circuit breakers. They say it took hours to find the "break," and it is currently being fixed.

During the outage, 56 staff members were called in, including 40 additional correctional officers. The IDOC said this standard procedure for any extended power outage. At no time was additional staff required due to inmate behavior. They say there were no incidents with inmates.

According to the IDOC, there was never a problem with inadequate heat at any time at VCC. The heating system is hot water/radiant, requiring electricity to pump the water into and out of the boiler, and to later power the movement of the heated water to extended coils throughout the facility.

They say temperatures were maintained in all 10 housing units and Health Care Unit because radiant heat systems are slow to cool off and slow to warm up.

The IDOC said temperatures in two housing units never went below 70 degrees; temps in six others stayed between 62 and 67 degrees, temps in two units stayed at 58 degrees or higher into Wednesday. One housing unit on Wednesday dropped to 47 degrees and portable heaters were used. That temperature climbed gradually.

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